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RESEARCH PAPER

Great-Power Politics and Institutional Constraints in UN Conflict Management: A Comparative Realist Analysis of Post-2000 Interventions in Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, and Venezuela

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses institutional barriers that constrain the effectiveness of the United Nations in major conflict zones since the year 2000. UN has been constructed to ensure international peace and justice but inequalities in the makeup of the Security Council are still there to influence decision making. The latest conflicts reveal the interference of geopolitical interests. The study represents a qualitative analysis that uses the Classical and Structural Realist theory by analyzing protracted conflicts, including Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, and Venezuela, with the complement of institutional and policy document analysis. Results indicate that veto politics often culminates in institutional stasis that prevents the UN to take decisive actions even when there are increasing humanitarian crises. Consent and slows down the resolution of conflict is curtailed by strategic rivalry among the great powers. The research proposes limited vetoes during humanitarian emergencies, more representation of third word states, greater regional co-operation.

| **KEYWORDS** | United Nations, Realism, Security Council, Veto Power, Great Power, Conflict Management, Global Governance, Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, Venezuela as well as Institutional Reform |

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) has been proclaimed long enough as the pillar of peace, justice, and collective security in the international front. The organization was founded in 1945 as a reaction to the destruction of the world wars and its goal was to eliminate the possibility of a recurrence of a world conflict with the help of the multilateral cooperation and institutionalized norms. However, in the last twenty years, the capacity of the UN to live up to this mandate has been put to the test on numerous occasions in conflict-ridden high stakes regions like Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, and Venezuela. Although the organization remains a key player in the humanitarian aid, development, and peacekeeping, its interventions have been mostly limited by the strategic concerns of the strongest states. This repetitive pattern casts basic questions to the ability of UN to act independently and efficiently in the modern international system.

The United Nations (UN) was formed in 1945 after the Second World War with the major aim of ensuring that the armed conflict was not carried out on a large scale, leading to international peace and security as well as ensuring that the sovereign states cooperate (Yaseen, et. al., 2019). The principles of collective security, respect to sovereignty, and making decisions multilaterally were incorporated in the UN Charter,

and the mechanisms to promote the conflict resolution, humanitarian aid, and development programs were the General Assembly, Security Council, and other specialized agencies. These mechanisms were over time central to the international system where they offered institutional sites of the international system of diplomacy, norm building and peacekeeping activities.

The UN has been experiencing more challenges in meeting these mandates since 2000 because of the intricate combination of emerging conflicts in the world, regional tensions, and strategic interests of the major powers. The cases of Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen and Venezuela demonstrate the limited role of the UN in the modern crisis management. The organization has been found in various occasions unable to exercise resolutions or effectively organize effective interventions not because there is lack of normative frameworks but rather because of the structural constraints of power politics and the institutional design of the Security Council.

Although the United Nations has a founding mission to enhance international peace, security, and collaborative conflict resolution, its ability to take decisive actions in key conflict areas since the year 2000 has continued to be limited. The Kashmir, Palestine, Ukrainian, Yemeni and the Venezuelan conflicts are high-stake conflicts where normative frameworks and institutional mechanisms are present, yet the UN is not able to carry out effective interventions or impose resolutions. This detachment generates a major issue in the analysis of global governance- that is, the conflict between the ideals of institutions and the facts of the great-power politics. The UN Security Council, specifically the veto authority of permanent five (P5) members, has become a very important structural impediment. There are vetoes that are regularly used to protect allies, safeguard national interests, or veto the actions that do not reflect national priorities. This means that decisions that are supposed to be made in a manner that promotes peace and justice are usually stalled, watered down or cancelled altogether which affects the credibility and effectiveness of the UN. To provide an example, India, not following UN resolutions on Kashmir, U.S. vetoes to protect Israel, Russian vetoes about resolutions on Ukraine, and involvement of regional powers in Yemen proves that institutional power is inferior to geopolitical factors.

Literature Review

The international relations have created an abundance of literature about the United Nations (UN) and its capacity to manage conflicts at the international level. However, unlike the liberal institutional scholars, who note the normative and functional possibilities of the organization, the realist perspective is concerned with the structural constraints determined by the great-power politics. These arguments are crucial in evaluating performance of UN in conflicts that occurred after 2000 whereby institutional action has been derailed in a number of occasions because of strategic considerations and politics of the Security Council.

Liberal Institutionalization: Standards, Cooperation, and UN Efficacy

Liberal institutionalization views the international organizations as partners that make the international system less anarchist. The institutions reduce the transaction costs, transparency, resolving mechanism in the event of a dispute, and compliance to international norms, as postulated by Keohane, 1984, and Abbott and Snidal, 1998. In this regard, the UN is not only a form of a forum but rather a normative and functional

instrument capable of transforming the behavior of states and offer collective security (Tariq et al., 2024; Arshad et al., 2024).

Conflict Mediation and Peacekeeping

The success of the UN peacekeeping is among the most obvious achievements of the UN peacekeeping as perceived by the scholars. The Bellamy and Williams (2010) reported that peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and Liberia (UNMIL) were effective in stabilizing post-conflict situations because they orchestrated the military, political and humanitarian efforts (Bukhari, 2024; Naeem et al., 2024). Similarly, East Timor (UNTAET) and Kosovo (UNMIK) programs demonstrate that UN may promote state-building and governance of a post-conflict setting (Chesterman, 2004; Bukhari, 2023). These actions bring out the fact that the UN is able to interfere in a conflict provided that the will of the major powers is not conflicting with the agenda of intervention (Hamid, 2025; Bukhari et al., 2024).

Normative Frameworks: Humanitarianism and Responsibility to Protect

The progression of normative ideologies like the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) explains how the UN has transformed the conventional peacekeeping into active involvement in humanitarian disasters (Bellamy, 2009; Evans, 2008). R2P offers a legal and ethical approach of intervention to stop mass atrocities, which indicates the increasing institutionalized interest in human rights and global justice (Hamid & Abbas, 2025; Bukhari et al., 2025). The liberal scholars believe that the mechanisms prove the ability of the UN to influence international behavior beyond the power politics.

Limitations in Liberal Analyses

Although there have been these triumphs, liberal scholarship is aware of strong limitations. According to Hurd (2011) and Thakur (2006), the effectiveness of the operations of the UN is extremely conditional on the political intentions as well as strategic inclination of the major powers. Bureaucratic slackness, shortage of resources and dependency on voluntary troop supply also curtail quick reaction during high intensity conflicts (Bukhari, 2025; Khan & Hassan, 2020). Accordingly, institutional action can be slow, fragmented and ineffective even in situations where normative mechanisms are in place. To take the case of liberal approaches, it has been recognized that the UN has been at centre stage in helping Yemen and Venezuela through humanitarian aid, but it cannot impose peace or solve political crises due to external vetoes and regional strategic interests.

Realist Perspectives: Power Politics and Institutional Constraints

Contrasting views are given by realist scholars who lay more emphasis on limitations of UN in an anarchic environment, state sovereignty and great power rivalry. Classical realists such as Morgenthau (1948) emphasize the importance of human ambition and national interest that states should strive to gain power and achieve security instead of institutional responsibility. Structural or neo-realists such as Waltz (1979) concentrate on the limitations of the system: anarchic world-system and unequal power distribution determines the behavior of the state and institutions are treated as the tools of the most powerful states not as independent agents.

Security Council and Veto Power

One key realist objection is directed at Security Council, and in particular, the veto power of permanent five (P5) members. Luck (2006) believes that vetoes legalize the asymmetry of power where major powers are able to block resolutions that were not in line with their strategic interest. Mearsheimer (2001) and Walt (1987) show that the Security Council plays a lesser role as an adjudicator of collective security in high-stakes conflicts and more of a venue where strategic tastes of dominant states are negotiated and legitimized.

Case Evidence from Post-2000 Conflicts

In accordance with realist predictions about UN constraints, empirical data proves that:

- Kashmir: The fact that India is unwilling to enforce the UN resolutions on Kashmir highlights that the sovereignty and strategic interests take precedence over the collective interests (Wirsing, 2003; Masood, et al., 2020). The mediation activities by the UN have also been more of a show and they have shown little institutional leverage.
- Palestine: The U.S has repeatedly used its veto power to protect Israel against a binding Security Council action which depicts the power of strategic alliance over the normative duties (Smith, 2010).
- Ukraine: Russian vetoes have stalemated action to deal with territorial aggression which is a structural situation of the collective security efforts being conditional on great-power approval (Shahbaz, & Muzaffar, 2025).
- Yemen: The war serves as evidence of the UN being limited in its operations due to cross-regional alliances, proxy wars, and security interests (Juneau, 2015).
- Venezuela: Different stances by the world superpowers have not led to a unified international action, which shows how the UN is prone to polarization on geopolitical basis (Corrales & Penfold, 2015).

All of these cases are examples of how it is easy to see institutional paralysis in the circumstances of great-power divergence, which in turn confirms the realist statement that the UN is a mirror of power relations, not a change in them.

UN Effectiveness in the Post-2000 Era: Structural Challenges

The new era after 2000 has brought on board some new challenges to global governance:

- Multipolarity: The emergence of China, revival of Russia and rising power of regional forces make decision making at the UN more difficult (Muzaffar, et al., 2017)**.**
- Complex Conflicts: Intrastate wars and hybrid conflicts (e.g., Yemen, Ukraine) overlap with the international interests of the global strategy, limiting the capabilities of the UN to maintain peace.
- Normative vs. Material Constraints: Despite well-constructed norms (e.g. R2P), it cannot bring about compliance in cases where great powers are against intervention.

Limitations to Operations: The reliance on voluntary contributions of troops, funding and political goodwill limits the ability of the UN to take decision actions (Hurd, 2011; Malone, 2004).

In reality, the experiences of these issues demonstrate that the UN intervention in high-stakes conflicts can be selective, contingent, and mostly affected by the strategic interests of the major powers.

Although both liberal and realist litterateurs can be of benefit, there are still gaps:

* The majority of the research is dedicated to individual cases or regions, which does not allow comparing institutional constraints in a variety of post-2000 conflicts.
* There is a dearth of systematic studies that relate Security Council politics, politics of veto and great-power interests to the performance of UN in various geopolitical settings.
* There is insufficient research on how normative frameworks (e.g. R2P) interact with structural power asymmetries, and the question remains open on whether or not meaningful institutional reform is possible.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical background of this research is based on Classical and Structural (Neo realist) Realism that will jointly give a strong perspective to the study of the structural constraints of the United Nations in managing the conflicts in the post 2000 period. Although the normative work of the UN is carried out in a system characterized by anarchy, unequal distribution of power and the strategic interests of sovereign states, it operates in the global environment. This model shows why institutional ideals frequently cannot be effectively put to work in high stakes conflicts.

Classical Realism

Classical realism focuses on the primacy of human nature, ambition and power pursuit in the dominant international politics (Morgenthau, 1948). States have self-interests and security concerns and the quest of national interests tends to trump normative commitments. In this respect, the UN remains a diplomacy platform and legitimization instead of an independent body that has the power to enforce collective security. The deliberation of Security Council, its vetoes and selective interventions, are just demonstrations of the overall calculations of states instead of the application of universal principles.

Structural (Neorealism)

Structural realism (Waltz, 1979) places the UN in the condition of the international system whereby the allocation of abilities defines the conduct of states and the effectiveness of the institutions. A structural aspect that strengthens the dominant position of major powers is the UN Security Council, and more so, the veto power of the P5, whereby acting together will only be done on the basis of their strategic alignment. The failure of the UN to impose resolutions in Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine and Yemen and Venezuela is a perfect example of how structural asymmetries determine the results, regardless of normative or operational capacities.

Application to UN Interventions

Combining Classical and Structural Realism, this framework describes the patterns of UN paralysis that are recurring:

- Kashmir: The interest of the state of India, which is focused on sovereignty rather than the decisions of the Security Council, is in line with the realist anticipations of state interest.
- Palestine: the U.S. vetoes demonstrate the effect of alliance politics on the normative requirements.
- Ukraine: The enforcement measures are blocked by Russian vetoes, which also shows the systematic restrictions of multipolar rivalry (Yaseen, et al., 2022).
- Yemen: entanglement of power regionally, and strategic priorities reduces the ability of the UN mediation.
- Venezuela: Polarization of the great powers hinders interventions of consensus.

According to this structure, failures of the UN are systematically foreseeable, and this is the conflict between the ideals of the institution and the great-power politics. It is also used to give a theoretical basis of examining the suggested reforms, which are veto limitation, increased representation, and improved regional collaboration, with regard to structural limitations.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is used to operational the main constructs of the study and to visualize the correlation of the great-power politics, UN institutional mechanisms, and conflict outcomes. It is structured in such a way that it facilitates the empirical study of the conflicts since 2000.

Key Concepts

- United Nations Institutional Capacity: The organization has the capacity to impose resolutions, organize peacekeeping, mediate conflicts and hold collective security. Liberalized in terms of Security Council operation, peacekeeping mandate and implementation of resolutions.
- Great-Power Politics: Strategic interests, alliance obligations, and geopolitical factors of P5 members which affect the decision-making in the UN. Institutionalized by use of veto, policy alignment and diplomacy.
- Conflict Outcomes: The extent to which the UN meets desired goals, such as resolving of conflicts, maintaining peace or stabilizing a situation. The indicators measured are resolution compliance, cessation of hostilities, and humanitarian indicators.
- Institutional Constraints: Institutional and procedural elements restricting UN action such as the Security Council veto, regional power politics as well as the effects of multipolar system (Yaseen, et. al., 2023).

United Nations Conceptual Relationships Structure

Great-Power Politics - UN Institutional Constraints: The ability of a UN to perform is influenced by strategic priorities of powerful nations, which are either exercised by means of vetoes or selective involvement.

UN Institutional Constraints - Conflict Outcomes: The institutional constraints such as the veto power and dependence during operations are the environmental factors that directly influence the effectiveness of the UN in managing conflicts.

Feedback Loop: The primary of great-power interests is reinforced by ineffective UN interventions, continuing to institutionalize the constraints on the norms and illegitimacy of the institutions.

United Nations Analytical Flow Structure

Independent Variable

[Great-power politics (P5 Interests, Alliances, Strategic Objectives)].

Intervening Variable

Institutional constraints of the UN (Veto, Bureaucracy, Structural Limitations).

Dependent Variable

Outcome of the conflict (Resolution, Peace, Stability)

Feedback Effects

(Feedback: UN Ineffectiveness or Strengthens the decision-making which is powered up)

This reference offers a theoretical and practical basis of examining how the politics of great powers systematically limit the UN interventions in different conflict regions. It also directs empirical research about Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, and Venezuela linking veto politics, institutional constraints and conflict outcomes.

Integration with Literature

The conceptual framework incorporates the experience of the literature:

- Liberal scholarship: Sees the potential in UN in norm-building, humanitarian aid and conflict mediation.

- Realist scholarship: Underlines institutional restrictions and domination of the P5 members in institutional outcomes.
- Empirical cases after 2000: The fact that normative capacities are always subordinated to strategic imperatives illustrates the advantage of the structural constraints perspective of institutional autonomy that the framework targets over institutional autonomy.

Methodology of Research

Methodology of Research is as defined as follows:

Material and Methods

The paper takes the qualitative, comparative case study approach in investigating the structural constraints of the United Nations in managing post-2000 conflicts. The study is based on Classical and Structural Realism, which is concerned with the way in which great-power politics limit institutional capacity, and influence the result of conflicts. The analysis of the several, strategically important cases, namely Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, and Venezuela, gives the study a chance to examine the patterns of the UN performance (or failure) in different geopolitical conditions.

Research Approach

Qualitative method is chosen, which allows exploring various complicated processes of political life and institutions in depth that cannot be fully discussed within the frames of quantitative methods. This approach allows for:

- Systematic study of Security Council decisions, use of vetoes and interventions of UN.
- Analysis of P5 members strategic interests and impact within the UN activities.
- Regional-specific dynamic analysis of conflict.

The qualitative method is also especially appropriate due to the nature of the research problem as normative and structural because the interactions between institutional behavior and power politics are complex.

Case Study Selection

The paper uses purposive sampling to choose five case studies which represent various aspects of UN intervention subject to the power politics of great powers:

- Kashmir: Features independence insubordination.
- Palestine: This is an example of alliance politics and frequent veto (U.S. protecting Israel).
- Ukraine: Exercises the power of the veto and multipolar rivalry (the role of Russia).
- Yemen: Displays how regional media and proxy wars affect the effectiveness of the UN.
- Venezuela: Unveils polarization of global powers in the way of multilateral agreement.

The cases both theoretically and empirically offer variation to make a comparative study of institutional constraints under various geopolitical settings.

Data Sources

The study data was be based on:

- Primary Sources: UN Security Council resolutions, UN records, official UN reports and statements by P5 members.
- Secondary Sources: Academic reports, books, policy reports, think tank reports, and newspaper articles.
- Analytical Reports: Reports by international crisis Group, human rights watch and other international groups reporting the dynamics of conflict and the actions of UN.

The validity and reliability of these sources can be achieved with triangulation which would enable the provision of a strong measure of both the institutional processes and geopolitical factors.

Research Design

The study is based on a comparative, explanatory case study design that is able to enable the study to determine patterns, causal mechanisms and structural determinants of UN effectiveness in post-2000 conflicts.

Comparative Design

The comparative design identifies five strategic selections that include 5 conflicts in order to explore them:

- The influences of Security Council vetoes and P5 interests on UN interventions.
- The impact of regional groupings, geopolitical competition and strategic pressures.
- The structural patterns of UN paralysis: are they consistent between cases?

The design allows cross-case analysis and, therefore, the identification of recurring mechanisms and generalizing the findings in the context of the theoretical framework of realism.

Explanatory Design

The research is explanatory as it aims at providing the main research question, which is: Why does the UN not act decisively in conflict zones of the post 2000 in spite of normative and operational capability? The explanatory design entails

- Important independent variables that can be identified: P5 strategic interests, veto power and regional alliances.
- Analysis of the dependent variable: UN conflict management effectiveness (resolved through enforcement of resolutions, peacekeeping efforts, and the results of mitigating conflicts).
- Finding causal links between the role of structural restrictions, great-power politics and performance of the UN, as it is conceptually consistent.

Analytical Strategy

The analysis was carried out in three steps:

- Document Analysis: The systematic review of Security Council resolutions, vetoes and UN reports in order to follow the institutional action and limitations.
- Contextualization of the case: The analysis of each conflict in particular to determine the strategic interests of the P5 members and the powers in the region as well as the dynamics of the conflict itself.
- Cross-Case Comparison: Determining structural patterns, mechanisms, and results and relating empirical data to the theoretical framework of Classical and Structural Realism in the five cases.

Such a design guarantees that the study is able to explain why the UN is limited and how such limitations are experienced in different situations of conflicts as well as offer theoretical and practical knowledge.

Rationale for Methodology

The qualitative, comparative, explanatory case study design is the best as it is justified by the fact that:

- It enables theorizing analysis between realism and the empirical findings.
- It fits the multidimensional nature of UN interventions and the state politics of power in many directions.
- It allows cross-case generalization and maintains the richness of case and the context of each particular conflict.

It aids in assessing institutional reform proposals by trying to correlate structural limitations with the observed results.

Results and Discussion

This analysis shows that it is not mainly that the United Nations is not skillful enough to respond decisively when large post-2000 conflict regions are at risk that makes the organization ineffective, but rather, the solidity of great-power politics, which is deeply rooted in its structure. In all the examples of Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen and Venezuela, one can observe the same pattern: at the moment when conflicts collide with the strategic interests, the alliance commitments or with the geopolitical priorities of the powerful states, collective security mechanisms are constrained or are completely paralyzed. The UN Security Council, which is supposed to be the main means of enforcement of the international peace, acts as a place where the disparity of power is institutionalized with the help of the veto.

The major assumptions of realism are affirmed in the comparative analysis. Classical Realism describes the state preference of national interest, sovereignty and strategic position over normative obligations as observed in the stance of India on Kashmir and United States defense of Israel. Structural Realism also explains why institutional paralysis is not accidental but systematic: the asymmetry in distribution of power in the international society, which is enhanced by the veto power, makes it conditional that enforcement should be based on the consent of the great powers. Even during situations of extensive humanitarian catastrophes, like Yemen and Venezuela, the UN intervention is restricted to mediation and relief but not coercive intervention.

The results are inconsistent with the liberal institutionalize assumptions that norms and institutions can alone influence the behavior of the state in high-stakes conflicts. Although the UN still enjoys moral legitimacy as well as operational relevance in the realms of humanitarianism, its efficacy in conflict management is inherently limited in its structure. In general, the article highlights a basic incompatibility between the normative agenda of peace and justice of the UN and the institutional structure that places more value on power than principle and, therefore, restricts its ability to provide collective security in a highly polarized international system.

Kashmir: India's strategic interests override Security Council resolutions.

The Kashmir conflict is one of the most evident constructions of how state-centric strategic interests may prevail over the decision of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as such that ultimately reveals the limitations of the institution of the UN in implementing collective security. India has continued to define Kashmir as an internal and a sovereign issue ever since the adoption of several UNSC resolutions in 1948-49 that demanded a cease fire and a plebiscite to decide the future status of the territory. This move has successfully undermined international mediation action and devalued UN mechanisms in the conflict.

In terms of realism, the Indian policy towards Kashmir is motivated by national security interests, territorial interests and internal political considerations. The geo-strategic position of Kashmir that lies between Pakistan and China makes it the centre of regional security computation in India. The adherence to international resolutions that may potentially change the territorial control is thus considered a direct danger on the state sovereignty and strategic stability. Formed according to the influence that Classical Realism gives, national interest and preservation of power is more important than the normative commitments, especially where vital interests are involved.

In its organizational structure, the UN has not been able to force the compliance through its enforcement power. Substantive discussions on Kashmir in the Security Council have not been conducted in decades, in large part because of the world changes in power balance as well as India increasing geopolitical importance. Its growing economic and strategic relations with the significant powers have further decreased the disposition of the permanent members to undermine its stance. This is indicative of a wider trend whereby states that are emerging or strategically significant can successfully overcome the pressure of the UN without experiencing any significant consequences.

Kashmir case therefore shows how UN power is limited when it comes to high stakes conflicts between strong states. Geopolitical realities notwithstanding the availability of well-defined normative guidelines and initial resolutions of the Security Council, the enforcement has been left to play second fiddle to geopolitical realities. Consequently the role of the UN in Kashmir has been limited to superficial involvement and not conflict management as is the case with realist arguments, that international institutions are actually mirrors of dominant power relations instead of limiting them.

Palestine: The allied interests are safeguarded by the U.S. vetoes in spite of the normative imperatives.

As seen in the case of the Palestinian conflict, there is a scenario where veto of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) enables the powerful states to pursue their interests to the disadvantage of the highest normative duties to the international law,

human rights as well as collective security. The United States has exercised its veto power in many occasions over the past decades, to be precise, on resolutions vetoed against resolutions against Israel, military activity in occupied territories, and accountability of the activity of violation of international human rights. Such vetoes have shocked the Security Council to move on binding resolutions irrespective of the broad based international consensus and obvious normative guidelines.

The politics of strategic alliance is the most suitable manner of explaining the U.S. behavior under the approach of realist. Israel is a key ally in the American Middle East policy as it is a strategic regional partner sharing a similar security, ideological and geopolitical interest. Washington, therefore, sees the security of Israel against counter-pressure by the international community as a value in preserving the power and authority of the region. By national interest and maintenance of alliances which Classical Realism predicts than by the abstract moral or legal obligation especially when fundamental strategic relationships are at stake, states are directed.

This power imbalance is institutional in UNSC at the structural level with the use of veto. Unilateral veto is also applied to overcome majority will on resolutions founded on the international law despite majority of the members of the Council voting in favor of the resolutions founded on the illegality of settlements or resolutions demanding ceasefire. The specified dynamic, in its turn, shows that normative imperatives, including the principles of self-determination and civilian protection, continue to remain subservient to the strategic reasoning of permanent members.

The consequences of the use of vetoes are not limited to the blockage of the policies. They undermine the credibility of UN as some neutral mediator and cause an impression of the selective application of international standards. The inability of the Security Council to assert itself in case of the Palestinian situation has solidified a long term position of unequal power and recurrent violence. This helps to argue in realist ways that the international institutions are not binding to the mighty states but reflect the status quo of the relations of powers so that the UN is not able to effectively intervene in the situation of a conflict where interests of great powers are concerned directly.

Ukraine: Russia exercises its veto authority to counter enforcement

The conflict in Ukraine could also be taken as an example to define how the enforcing powers of a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) can be vetoed, and therefore to show the structural limitations of collective security in situations that concern the interests of great powers. Following the actions of Russia in Ukraine, including occupying Crimea and subsequent military reinforcement, there were numerous draft resolutions condemning, blaming the government, and coercive action on Russia shown in the Security Council. All this was several times reexamined by the veto of the Russian government and the Council could not provide the consent to any form of binding enforcement on the principles of Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Structural realist would say that this is the reason why Russia acts like this because it is the logic of survival and power maximization in the anarchic international system. Ukraine is the center of the Russian security and geopolitical policy, particularly in regard to NATO expansion and the power of influence in the region in Eastern Europe. Any Security Council resolution that can be used to support sanctions, intervention or even the international imposition is therefore viewed as a direct threat to the strategic

interests of Russia. Just as it would be anticipated by the neo-realists, Moscow does not apply the veto as a defense on behalf of the law, but as a means to secure the territory under its jurisdiction and control the foreign intrusion into its matters.

It is also institutionally ill suited to address the conflicts in which a permanent member is a direct participant in the conflict. A part of the political struggle is made by the veto, where the law and the moral values, including territorial integrity and the law against the use of force, have second place to the politics of power. This has restricted the intervention of UN in Ukraine to passing of resolutions in the general assembly which are not binding.

The example of Ukraine thus brings out the natural contradiction of the UN system that is, although the organization is charged with the responsibility of maintaining peace and security within the international system, its institutional design enables the superpower states to be absolved of the responsibility. This validates the realist arguments that the UN can never be an enforcer of norms in the conflicts between great-power rivalry, but indicating instead of mirroring the status quo of power profiles in the international system.

Yemen: Regional affiliations work against coherent UN intervention

The case of the war in Yemen reveals that regional formations, as well as proxy wars in its specific form, exhibit a paralyzing impact on focused and deliberate action on the part of the United Nations. Since the onset of the intensive hostilities in 2015, the war has evolved into a multilayered conflict involving the local groups, regional forces, and foreigners. Even though the UN has remained in the mediation process, humanitarian assistance, and facilitation of ceasefire efforts, it has not been able to impose a comprehensive political solution due to the competing strategic interests of the key stakeholders in the region and on the international front.

Yemen in realist perspective is a classical proxy war in which the regional powers are concerned about the competition and not a concerted strategy to conflict. The war is interpreted by Saudi Arabia and its allies in the terms of the security of the region and the spread of the Iranian influence, and Iran also supports Houthi as the continuation of the general policy in the region. These conflicting interests have led to the polarizing international system that limits the desire to take strong or binding actions that may jeopardise their alliances or regional interests among the members of the Security Council.

Organizational the UN Security Council has failed to avoid the enforcement of consensus based resolutions that cover humanitarian access and diplomatic interaction without employing enforcement strategies. Disunity between permanent members some of whom have acting alliances with coalition states has resulted in watered down mandates and timid diplomacy. This selective involvement is a reminder of the structural constraint that the UN feels by participating in intervention that can cost it the regional allies of power or interfering with greater geopolitical balance.

Therefore, the role played by the UN in Yemen has largely focused on the humanitarian impacts of the war rather than the political and security powers involved in the war. Regardless of the overwhelming awareness of humanitarian catastrophe and violation of the international law, there has been the mere lack of concerted action. Yemen case thus presents a case in support of realists that in a conflict where regional

power politics and interest politics of alliances are the determinants, the action of the UN cannot become a dispassionate and unquestioning peace agent based on the strategic consideration of the states.

Venezuela: Political polarization of great powers does not allow multilateral consensus.

The Venezuelan crisis is one of the examples of how political polarization between great powers may limit their ability to act as one, especially at the United Nations, especially at the Security Council, where conflicting geopolitical interests vanish multilateral consensus. At the beginning of 2026, it reached a new level as the United States organized a military intervention in Venezuela, seized the president Nicolas Maduro, and divided the members of the Council profoundly. The Charter of the UN requires that all Member States are under the duty to avoid unilateral use of force against the territorial integrity of other states, but the responses in the Security Council were distinctively different, based on the opposite strategic dispositions and understanding of the international law.

The United States justified the action by its law enforcement and self-defence, whereas most other Council members criticized the intervention as a breach of sovereignty and a bad case law that brings harm to the ideals of the UN Charter. The U.S. operation was described as armed aggression by countries such as Russia and China, and emphasized that the use of force outside of the mandate of the Council creates a disruptive precedent on how international relations are formed. In the meantime, some of the elected members raised the issue of unilateral military action and demanded respect of sovereignty and charter norms.

This polarization is a representation of a structural limitation: in the case a permanent member is directly engaged in a conflict, the ability of the Security Council to assume binding action is highly diminished. Even a proposal to condemn or to undertake violations has minimal chances of being successful in the face of conflicting strategic interests that is backed by veto power. Western and non-aligned states disagree radically about the way to frame the crisis and the way it should be addressed, so the Council can only conduct the debates the way it was in General Assembly, or use non-binding words instead of making binding decisions.

This has made the role of the UN limited to dialogue without power to take decisive collective actions, respect of international law and humanitarian issues. The case of Venezuela therefore makes us understand that the great-power polarization is fundamentally crippling of multilateral consensus, and this is consolidating arguments that put forward by realists against the UN as a normative institution that is rather a product of power and politics.

Findings

The findings of the study indicate that the United Nations management of the major post-2000 conflict zones is characterized by an institutional constraint in a regular and systematic trend. In each of the discussed cases, such as Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, and Venezuela, it is possible to prove that the effectiveness of the UN intervention directly relies on the strategic interests and the political orientation of the great powers and permanent members of the Security Council in particular. UN is not a

self-enforcer of collective security and has restrictions to its operation, which it is power imbalances in the design of UN.

Firstly, the paper arrives at the conclusion that the veto power of the permanent five (P5) is the most significant structural alternative under which the great-power politics distort the collective action. In both cases, veto or a realistic threat of veto blocked the enforcing action in both cases or prompted non-binding watered-down resolutions. It is a confirmation that the Security Council decision-making process is more strategic as opposed to being normative as is the case in self-determination, territorial integrity and civilian protection.

Second, the findings show that UN intervention is most successful when dealing with low politics especially the humanitarian aid and technical mediation where the interests of the great powers are not directly challenged. The inactive intervention of the UN, on the other hand, is confined to rhetoric over great stakes battles over sovereignty, borders of jurisdiction or whereby there are alliances commitments but not enforcing. This demonstrates the clear functional distinction of normative ambitions of UN and working boundaries.

Third, it also proves using the comparative analysis that the phenomenon of institutional paralysis is not a case specific one but structural and predictable one. Whether restricting intervention is in alliances politics (Palestine), great-power politics (Ukraine), proxy wars within a region (Yemen) or polarization between the two geopolitical factions (Venezuela), the same forms of restraining intervention are reflected. Finally, the conclusion of the paper is that the sense of selective enforcement is reinforced by the very inability to take decisive action again and again, and the credibility and legitimacy of the UN are compromised in the long-run perspective. Overall, these findings are in line with the realist claims according to which international institutions are not restrictive of power relations but are instead reflective of them, especially in conflict-based scenarios involving major strategic interests.

Conclusion

In this paper, it concluded that, although the normative role of the United Nations is to maintain international peace, justice and collective security, the politics of great powers, and specifically the permanent members of the Security Council, are structurally constrained by the politics of the United Nations. Through the reviewed post-2000 conflicts, i. e. Kashmir, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen and Venezuela, the analysis shows that there is a common thread in that where the geopolitical interests of the powerful states are at stake, i.e. when it comes to strategic interests, commitment to alliances, or geopolitics, the action of the UN is crippled. The systematization of veto power, selective involvement, and alignment of interests with the national interests projects the normative imperatives to the background, which makes the UN more of a reflection of existing sources of power than an actor which imposes international norms.

Irrespective of such limitations, the UN still has a role to play in humanitarian relief, peacekeeping organization and mediation whereby the strategic values of the major powers do not pose such a threat. The study suggests reforms, including reduction of veto as well as increasing representation of developing countries, enhancing regional collaboration as well as transparency in an effort to make the study more credible and effective. In general, the study highlights a key contradiction in world governance the normative principles of the UN tend to be surged by structural exigences of power and

structural change is necessary to bring the work of the organization in line with its original mandate of ensuring international peace and justice.

Recommendations

This research paper l recommends a number of measures to help in improving the credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness of the organization based on the analysis of institutional constraints in managing UN conflicts.

To start with, permanent seat Security Council members must be limited in exercising their veto power during mass atrocities, humanitarian crises or in cases of long-term conflicts. A possible way to eliminate strategic obstruction but still address the considerations of state sovereignty would be to implement features like a veto override, or demand that vetoes be justified.

Second, it is significant to increase the representation of developing and regional powers in the Security Council and to make the decision-making more inclusive and legitimate. The inclusion of a broader audience would assist in avoiding polarization and making sure that other opinions are involved to respond to the global crisis.

Third, the UN ought to enhance frameworks of cooperation in regions. It is possible to work closely together with regional institutions and maximize the use of local conflict knowledge to improve preventive diplomacy and mediation, especially in complicated conflicts such as Yemen and Venezuela.

Fourth, enhancing transparency and accountability in the decision-making process in the UN would strengthen trust in this institution. Reporting clarity on the reasoning behind resolutions, use of veto and limits to operations can contribute to normative legitimacy and give way to positive interaction.

Lastly, institutional changes should be aware of the structural facts of great-power politics. Even though UN action should be foundational on normative ideals, practical measures to maneuver power disparities, which may include coalition-building and gradual interventions, can enhance conflict outcomes without relying on the authority of the organization.

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